



County Durham
ageUK
Let's change how we age



ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES	3
MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER	4
VISION	5
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS	6
PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW	8
RETAIL	19
THANK YOU TO FUNDERS	20
CONTACT INFORMATION	21



**DENISE ELLIOTT
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**



Welcome to Our Age UK County Durham Annual report for 2025/2026. It has been a year of uncertainty and change across the world and the country, affecting our everyday lives.

Here at Age UK County Durham we have continued to support older people in the County to navigate and manage the financial, emotional and social impacts in these challenging times.

The challenges for us, however remain with reducing funding streams and increasing demand for services. That being the case our amazing volunteers continue to be an integral part of our organisation, delivering our services and staffing our retail outlets. Without the volunteer community we could not achieve the outcomes for our service users across the County and we are truly grateful for their dedication and time. With more volunteers we deliver more and support more of those in need and therefore we are always seeking to recruit volunteers to join our team.

Once again , this year, our staff have worked tirelessly to deliver our charitable aims whether that is in our retail outlets or managing and delivering the services that enable people aged over 50 to receive the support they need.

Finally , I would like to thank the Management team who through the leadership of our CEO Robyn Holmes have continued to direct and successfully deliver our strategy in these uncertain times. On behalf of the Trustees, I thank you all.



Robyn Holmes

**Chief Executive Officer
Age UK County Durham**

This year has been full of innovation and development. We have welcomed new staff who share our commitment to older people and are willing to go the extra mile to make later life less stressful and more enjoyable.

We are committed to giving people aged 50 and over a stronger voice, ensuring that the issues that matter to them are heard and that meaningful change is made.

We are particularly concerned that the significant impact of the move to digital services on older people is not being fully recognised.

Many older people face practical barriers that can prevent them from accessing essential services, including:

- limited digital skills and confidence;
- lack of knowledge about how to use online services;
- the cost of devices, equipment and internet access; and
- limited support to get online and stay connected.

These barriers are leaving older people increasingly isolated from vital services and everyday activities, including NHS care, banking, housing support, social engagement, shopping and benefits.

We urgently need the Government and NHS to allocate funding and resources to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to access services, health care and the support they need.



A YEAR IN REVIEW

Our Vision

**TO POSITIVELY TRANSFORM THE AGEING
EXPERIENCE IN COUNTY DURHAM**

Mission

**ENABLING PEOPLE TO HAVE HAPPY,
HEALTHIER, LONGER LIVES**

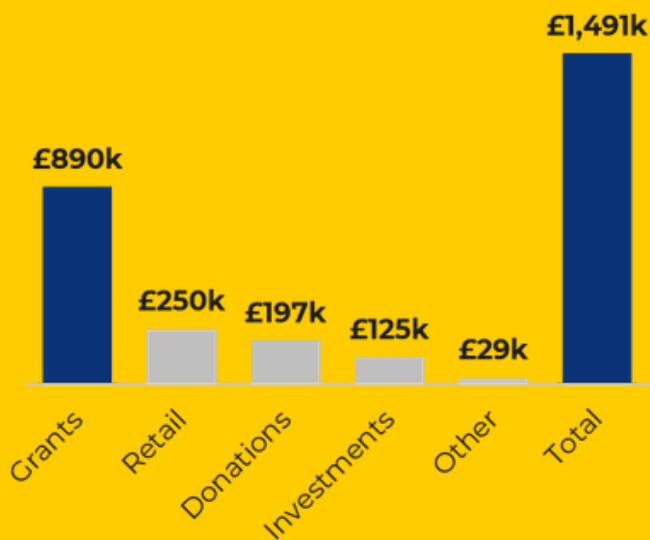
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL INCOME	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	FREE RESERVES
£1,491,000 (+30%)	£1,368,000	+£186,000 (incl. £63k property gain)	£1,157,000 (approx. 12.2 months)

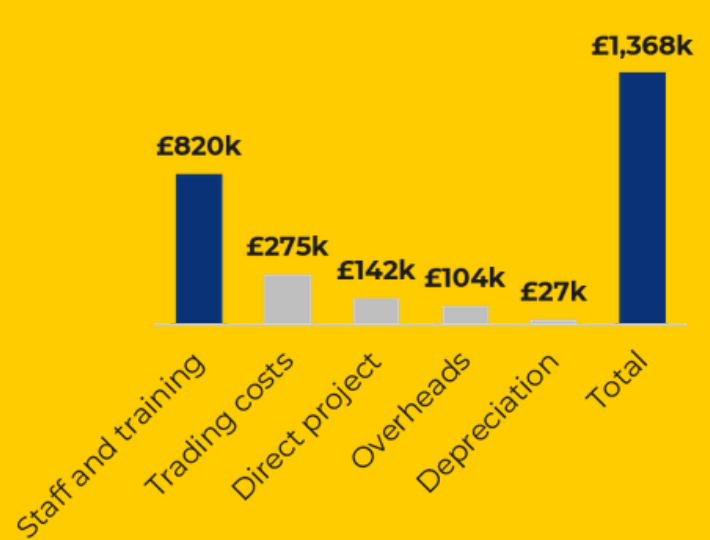
Income Generation

Total income increased by 30%, from £1,151,000 to £1,491,000, representing the strongest growth in recent years. Grant funding increased from £668,000 to £890,000, representing approximately 60% of total income. This funding mainly supported the Household Support Fund and new grant programmes, alongside ongoing Mental Health Support and Cost of Living & Debt Advice. Donations increased from £92,000 to £197,000, including a large one-off legacy of £130,000. Investment income remained stable at £125,000. Retail income remained steady at £276,000 despite the closure of the North Road shop. We continue to diversify our income streams to reduce reliance on any single funder.

INCOME SOURCES



EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN



Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £1,368,000. Staff and training costs were £820,000, representing approximately 60% of total expenditure. This reflects our investment in skilled staff delivering core services to vulnerable people over 50. The remaining expenditure comprised project delivery costs, retail operations and essential overheads.

Risk Management

The trustees regularly reviewed the charity's reserves, designated funds and financial risks to respond to changes in funding and maintain financial stability. This supported the continued delivery of our essential services and more.

Conclusion

Through robust financial and risk management strategies, and the continued efforts of our teams, Age UK County Durham remains on a strong financial footing. This provides a solid foundation for continuing to support older people and extending our impact across County Durham during the coming year.

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Age UK County Durham's Information and Advice service is a free, confidential, impartial service helping people aged 50 and over, their family and carer's access benefits and services. Our aim is to help older people maintain their independence and improve their physical and mental wellbeing. A holistic service provides factual information and advice on issues such as finances, health, housing and access to local services. We provide factsheets, leaflets, signpost and make referrals to partners working together to maximise support.

£7,874,759

**UNCLAIMED
BENEFITS
ACCESSED**

3780

CLIENT ENQUIRIES

1140

HOME VISITS

910

**DISABILITY FORMS
COMPLETED**

677

**BENEFIT
ELIGIBILITY
CHECKS**

311

**PEOPLE
SUPPORTED WITH
ENERGY AND
FOOD VOUCHERS**



99% of clients rated the service **9** and above out of **10**

91% of clients felt their financial position has improved

74% of clients felt their independence had improved

73% of clients felt they are more likely to be able to keep their home warmer

69% of clients felt they could pay their household bills more easily

"Peace of mind. Live life again without worrying"

- We supported **207** people through the A Place to Call Home project funded by Skipton Building Society
- Delivered a Financial Advocacy Service supporting the most vulnerable older people to manage their finances
- Delivered a form completion service for Lasting Power of Attorney.
- Delivered talks and provided information stands in community venues around the County.

"This has been a life changing improvement to my meagre budget"

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Age UK County Durham's Digital Service addresses and reduces digital exclusion and enables equal access to benefit from the opportunities of the digital world for people aged 50 and over, living in County Durham. Funded by ICB and Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, we support people aged 50 and over to access the NHS app and access the support necessary to engage with an ever expanding digital world to which many older people are excluded without new skills, knowledge and understanding.

"You prevented fraud by blocking local portable transmitters for 2G scams, helped printing from my PC, helped uploading from my copier to my PC, helped to upload 20 years of holiday photos to my new PC. Thank You"

217

**CLIENTS
RECEIVING
ONE TO ONE
VISITS**

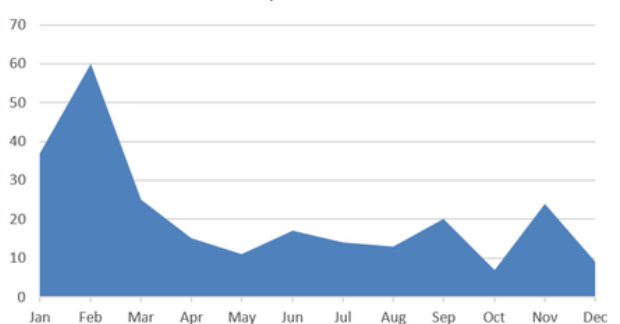
122

**AWARENESS
SESSIONS**

2052

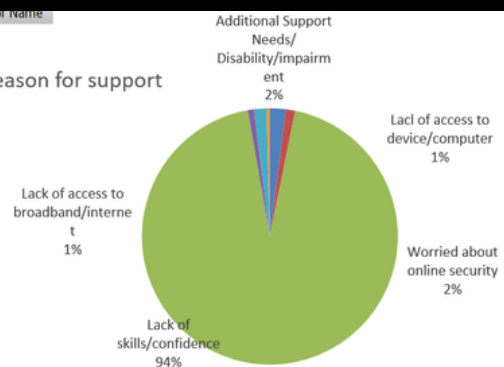
**OLDER
PEOPLE
UPSKILLED**

Referrals by Month 2025-2026



Count of reason

Reason for support



COMMUNITY SHED

The Community Shed, is a space where members of the community can come to socialise, share experiences and learn new skills. **194** activities have taken place this year which is a **28** activity increase on previous year.

1115 attendances which is a **353** attendance increase on previous year.

24 people new to the activity with **24** new to the organisation.

Woodwork items made in the Community Shed are passed to the Superstore to sell, generated £1800 sales.



Mr H was recently bereaved and felt very alone as he had been married for 60 years and he and his wife did everything together. As a retired engineer whose career had him travelling the world, he depended on his wife to look after the home and keep control of all the finances.

Mr H got in touch desperately needing help to the point he did not want to be here as he was so lonely. He was referred to our Mental Wellbeing telephone service. After a number of calls a confident relationship was built between our wellbeing worker and Mr H, a knowledge of his interests was discussed and our wellbeing worker suggested joining our community shed drop in sessions. Here he could meet and socialise with older people in a similar position.

Mr H came along to his first drop in session and has not missed a single session often quoting "what a godsend it was that Age UK County Durham have done for him."

CULTURE COMPANIONS

This year we organised **56** activities, an increase of **19** activities on the previous year.

Events included visits to County Durham's famous Mighty Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ housed at the New Victoria Centre in Howden-le-Wear, Lumley Castle, Durham Gardens and Seahams' well known glass beach

We had **795** attendances which is a **434** attendance increase on previous year.

138 people were new to the activity with **75** new to the organisation.

A gentleman who attends our New Age Kurling group in Easington got in touch to see if we had any other activities as he was feeling lonely and needed to try other things. After a chat with our development worker, he was invited to come along to our drop in session at the community shed to meet and socialise with people in a similar position as himself.

After one session we learnt that he is a retired engineer and from that he joined our woodwork sessions. After another session at the drop in, he joined our Culture Companions project and came along to an organised tour of the Ryhope Engine Museum. Later he commented on how delighted he was to have made contact with us and he never was aware of the different activities and projects we provide. He also thanked us for Culture Companions as he has now volunteered at the Ryhope Engine Museum to share his passion in old engines.



AGE WITHOUT LIMITS



Age Without Limits Day is the Centre for Ageing Better Campaign to challenge ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older. It is an annual day of collective action to end ageism in everyday life, in our communities and in our workplaces.

We champion this ethos throughout our work and we hosted a fun filled day on the river in Durham with Adventure Access CIC to celebrate Ageing and Challenge Ageism.

The collective age of the participants across the day was 2057, with 946 years making up the morning group and 1111 years enjoying the afternoon session!

Feedback from participants was fantastic with many asking to be kept informed of any further opportunities. We even managed to support a client living with long term health conditions who relies on a mobility scooter to access the session! We arranged an assessment for the client with Adventure Access in advance so they could undertake a safety risk assessment to ensure the client could be fully accommodated. On the day the client was discretely supported by the instructors to safely access the canoes with their group and all reported to have had a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

The event attracted excellent publicity with ITV Tyne Tees News coverage and an associated local press article

The Northern

13

Echo<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/25237627.paddlers-aged-50-plus-enjoy-splashing-day-durham/>

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This programme of work is designed to be responsive and in doing so, establish community based, accessible services that meet the emerging needs of older people's mental wellbeing, include services that address the issues underpinning poor mental and physical wellbeing and offer a seamless and responsive pathway to secondary mental health services if appropriate. The purpose is to offer a service to people that prevents them entering secondary services.

In addition the programme offers people living with poor mental health (due to long term health or mobility conditions), Physio and Occupational therapies, building confidence and strength.

The Bereavement Groups offers those coming to terms with loss and grief, a place for support and reflection.

Referrals

584

Individuals receiving Welfare Support

236

Contacts

8305

Individuals receiving Bereavement Support

138

Closed clients recording Improved mental health

53%

PHYSIOTHERAPY

The Age UK County Durham Physiotherapy service is tailored to help people whose mental health is negatively impacted upon by a mobility problem

‘It’s hard to express in words how great this experience has been. Everything I’d hoped and things I couldn’t have known or understood. I was so stuck. It has been so valuable to me for my personal growth and understanding. Thank you doesn’t really cut it.’

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

The Occupational therapy service supports people in gaining or regaining motivation and independence in daily life. From adapting the home environment to improving routines — home visits are tailored to your unique circumstances.

“My life is so different now, I feel like my old self. I wouldn’t have ever been able to do this on my own. I can’t thank you enough.”

COGNITIVE STIMULATION THERAPY (CST)

This is a brief, evidence-based treatment for people with mild to moderate dementia. Twice weekly sessions were held at accessible venues across County Durham; Ferryhill, Seaham, Durham and Barnard Castle.

“the group has helped me cope with something I never thought I would have to cope with”

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

516 BENEFICIARIES
6528 COMBINED ATTENDANCES

LUNCH CLUBS

6 CLUBS
137 PEOPLE
ATTENDING

DANCE

6 SESSIONS
240
PARTICIPANTS

EXERCISE
AND SPORTS
7 DIFFERENT
CLASSES
78
PARTICIPANTS

HOT MEALS (Household Support Fund)

11,898

hot meals delivered to

2657

older and isolated people

With thanks to the support and partnerships of Shildon Alive, Focus Easington, Heart on the Terrace, Blackhall Community Centre, Teasdale Lunch Clubs, Pelton, Shotton and Quebec Community Centres

£11,755

given in food and energy vouchers

Chapter 5

Future you



A Lottery funded pilot project delivered in Weardale and Newton Aycliffe with the aim to support people aged 50 - 69 prepare for a healthy and financially secure later life. Establishing activities that promote social engagement, mental stimulation and exercise, offering workshops to inform and prepare for financial securities and better health, the project continues to meet the need of rural and urban communities.

42 activities have been delivered including Walking with Alpacas, Festive Crafts and Baking, Glass fusion, Watersports and Ceramics. 15 health awareness sessions have equipped people with a greater understanding of keeping healthy and well now, for later life and financial sessions ensure there is a sound knowledge of financial security for later life.

**15 HEALTH
AWARENESS
SESSIONS**

**316 PEOPLE
AGED 50- 69
SUPPORTED**

**7 FINANCIAL
INFORMATION
SESSIONS**

**42
ACTIVITIES**

Help at Home Shopping Service

Over the past year, our shopping service has supported **48** clients. Of these, **9** were assisted by volunteers with in-person shopping, while **39** received support with online shopping. The service helps older people to remain independent in their own homes and provides a vital lifeline for those who are unable to go out to shop or complete an online order themselves.

During the last year, we completed **719** online shops for clients. Some clients receive weekly support, others use the service fortnightly, and some contact us less frequently when they need assistance arranging their shopping.

Volunteers also supported clients with **300** shopping trips, visiting clients to collect their shopping lists, purchasing items from the supermarket, and delivering them directly to clients' homes.

Clients greatly value the service, with many sharing positive feedback such as, "This is wonderful" and "I couldn't manage without you."

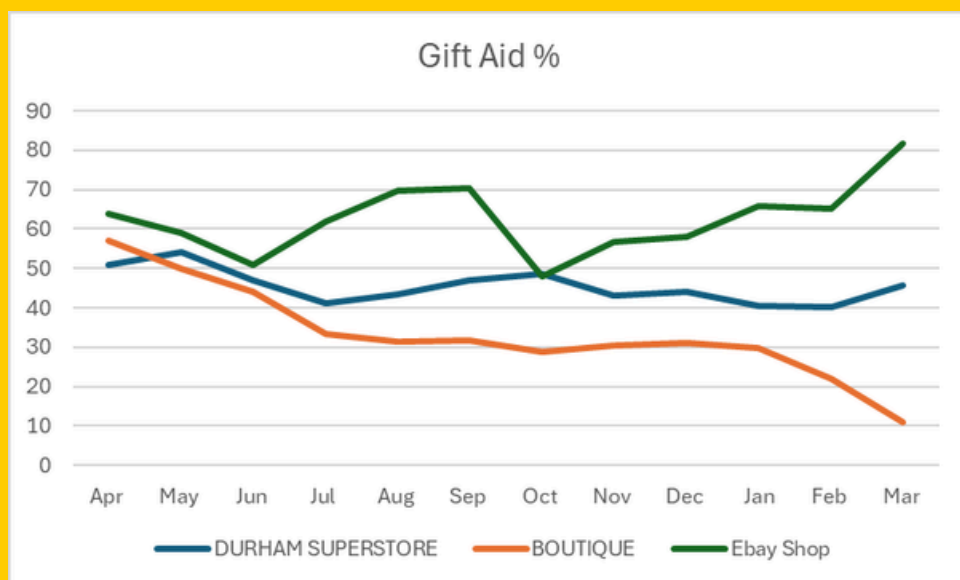
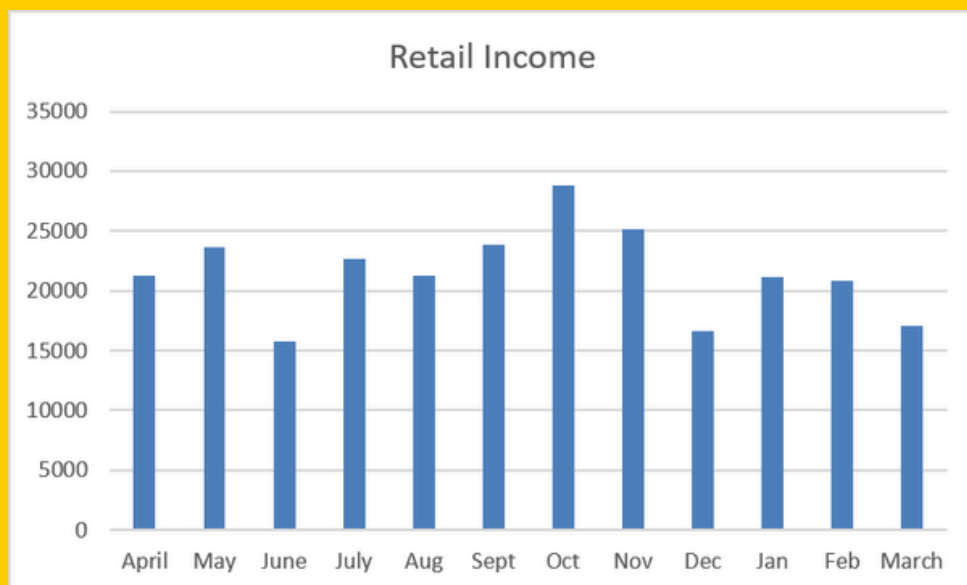
When completing online shops, we occasionally need to liaise with supermarket online support teams. Staff have responded very positively to the service, commenting that "it's a great thing you are doing" and "I think more places should offer this service, as it's so valuable to people."

RETAIL

Another successful year of trading at both the Superstore, North Road and eBay.

Income increased by 6% on last year with Gift Aid peaking at 53% (the national average is 32%).

New volunteers have been recruited throughout the year, their contribution is vital to the success of our shops.





WITH THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS VOLUNTEERS

**Those who make profit happen in the retail outlets.
Those without whom the lunch clubs would not run,
the craft sessions come together, isolated people
receive shopping and many activities run smoothly.**

**AGE UK (NATIONAL)
SKY COMMUNITY FUND
BALLINGER TRUST
DURHAM COMMUNITY ACTION
DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
NATIONAL LOTTERY
ICB
SPORT ENGLAND**

CONTACT US

info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk/countydurham/

0191 386 3586



